

Experiences of Internationally Educated Teachers

An inadequate level of language proficiency may lead to isolation

Maggie - an IETC

And before I came to OISE, I worry about my language barrier and culture. So I think as a teacher, if I cannot speak fluently, how could I teach students, that's the big concern.

Maggie – an IETC

Actually, after I began my studies at OISE, my concerns came true, and sometimes the situation was even worse than I thought. At the beginning I remember that when we did the group work, some of my classmates didn't want to be my partner, so I felt badly at that time. But I understand that people, they care about their marks, I understand them although I felt bad.

Maggie – an IETC

During the class sometimes I found it hard for me to join the conversation because almost everybody in my cohort are the native speaker. They don't have any problem with communicating, so sometimes I found it hard for me continue the conversation, so my way is to observe because we were focused on one topic.

I experienced differences between teaching strategies used in my country of origin and those I was expected to implement during my practicum

Katherine – An IETC

One thing that I really learned and that has resounded with me was being learner-centred because where I came from, teaching practices, there were mostly teacher-centred: Teachers talk a lot and students were mostly passive receivers. And here, she told me that, I was in a grade 2, a primary grade, and she said, "Just try to talk for 15 minutes, and as much as possible give the students the chance to explore and to do hands on activities and do cooperative group work, which is very important I think for internationally trained teachers, especially for most of them who are using more traditional teaching style. That was very good because you do see the difference in how much more engaged the students are and how much they learn and that they sort of own the learning process rather than passively receiving in one ear and then it goes the next time you're not there. So it was really good. That was, I would say, the most important thing I learned that it's not about how well I can teach the lesson best but how well can the students learn. What's the best way for the students to learn rather than what's the best way for me to teach. That's something I learned.

A course specifically designed for IETCs helped enhance my self-esteem

Tara – an IETC

I also took this optional course first semester called Language and Culture in the Classroom and I had to say that that course helped me improve my self-esteem because most of the students in that course were internationally educated students, so I had a better self-esteem to talk in the class and also in that course they taught us lots of good strategies to improve our English and to improve our class management because I come from a very different culture when it comes to student discipline and student culture, so I needed some input to get ready for the Canadian education system.

Prepare to work hard

Tara – an IETC

This course is very intense even for a native English speaker but when it comes to someone who has the English language as a barrier is going to be even tougher. So if an essay or a reflection takes one hour for a native English speaker to write, it's going to be three hours, four hours for someone like me who has a problem in language. What I mean, one of the strategies for me was to spend more time, maybe. The amount of time I spent on my assignments was more compared to my other classmates.

Using the available support and resources can result in a more positive experience

Tara – an IETC

Of course the time helped and there were lots of support. I had support from my instructors, I had support from my classmates, they made it easy for me at the ACSC centre, which helped me a lot. It helped to improve my self-esteem and seek help.

Teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds enrich the program

Sergio – an IETC

Well, I sense that the B.Ed program at OISE itself encourages teacher educators to include all kinds of students, all kinds of minorities, whatever the minority is: race, religion, creed or language, first language. So I felt included, I would say with all the different courses I attended and that made me feel good.

Teacher educators are ready to help and support you

Katherine – an IETC

Another thing that was really helpful to me was that how accessible my instructors were. They gave us their e-mail addresses and their phone numbers and cell numbers and that we could reach them anytime and anywhere. So I would say that the personality and the warmth that our instructors extended to us paid a huge role in making me feel more comfortable because I was really intimidated because you get that signal from the whole government structure and from the Canadian government that your education isn't good enough because it wasn't recognized.

Tara - an IETC

I have to say that for most parts I've got more support than what I expected in OISE. When I started this program, I never thought that the teacher educators are going to be so supportive. I remember that when I was at my practicum, I've got telephone calls from my math teacher in OISE, Mr. Lancaster. He called me at home to see if I have a problem, if I want support. And I remember once when I had a problem, I was on the phone with him for one hour and he was helping me with my lesson plan, and also the same about my cohort coordinator, Mr. De Angelis. He was supportive of me taking part in the prep program, where I switched my internship and my practicum. And all the way, he accommodated for me and overall, I had a very good experience and I think if all the teacher educators are as supportive as the ones I worked with, and understand the frustration faced by teacher educators, it's going to be really helpful.

A positive practicum experience

Tara – an IETC

Speaking out of my personal experiences, I had a very good experience in my practicum. Practicum is a very exhausting experience and if you don't have the right associate teacher, it's going to make it more difficult for you. But I was lucky enough to work with four amazing associate teachers, they were all really supportive; they never had prejudice against me because I speak English as my second language or I was not originally from Canada. They were really supportive when it came to my language, they would correct me, they would give me feedback on my language besides my curriculum and content and teaching practice and even when it came to my written English for preparing tests and worksheets, they would work with me and help me correct my sentences and write it in proper English. I even remember once I had this experience of putting up an assignment, and I was not sure. I had a tight schedule, and I was not sure if I

can do one paragraph during the lunch and do the copying and I asked my associate teacher to do it for me. And I remember he told me that he is not going to do it for me because it's not going to help me to learn. And he said that he is willing to stay for his lunch break and help me correct my paragraph, but he wants me to do it myself and I think what he did was really valuable and I was lucky enough to work with another English-as-a-second language speaker associate teacher, that was a very good role model to me, to show me that although English was not his first language, he was such a successful teacher, he knew his subject and he had respect of the students and the colleagues.

**An associate teacher comments on the IETCs she worked with
Carol – an associate teacher**

...all of my student-teachers made a real connection with the students in my community in the schools. There were very receptive to sharing with each other, any opportunities to discuss their culture and the experiences that the IETs are bringing into the classroom. I was very impressed with their willingness, their enthusiasm that they've shared with the rest of the staff; they were able to participate in the staff meeting and the whole culture of the school very quickly in the week and a half they were with us.

**An Internationally Educated Teacher Candidate speaks favourably of associate teachers
Tara – an IETC**

I have to say that from what I've heard from my friends, the number of cases where associate teachers are supportive and helpful is far beyond the number of ones who are maybe not as good. So I think most of the time we are lucky to have good associate teachers in our system and I really cherish the experience and how they have shared the experience with me.

**Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates are passionate about teaching
Katherine – an IETC**

I would like to say thank you to OISE/UT for giving me this chance because, I think for most of us we, it's so hard to get into the OISE/UT program and I had to go through university and there is a lot of barriers that we have to overcome, more than most native English speakers here so we really are passionate about teaching and dedicated towards teaching, and I am glad that you have such a diverse student population here too because it helps us to know that there are a lot of us

who were really trying very hard and hopefully we can serve as good role models for students in primary and secondary level.

If you try hard, you will succeed!

Tara – an IETC

And my last word is that I don't want to disappoint anyone, this is not an impossible task to do. When I started this course, I had a five-month old baby, and I was an English-as-a-second-language speaker, and I did it. So if I could do it, everyone else could do it. They just have to try hard.

Teachers' college is worth the experience!

Katherine – an IETC

I would say, "Go to Teachers' College." Definitely. It's really helpful to understand the theory and to be exposed to new and innovate teaching practices and to be exposed to whole school culture and philosophy, which could be really different from what they are used to. And it would help them be better teachers not just in teaching the students but also working within that school culture that doesn't clash with other teachers and sort of makes the students confused. Yeah, definitely go to school and learn about teaching instructions and teaching methods and the best teaching practices.

Experiences of the Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates

- An inadequate level of language proficiency may lead to isolation.
- The practicum provided an opportunity for IETCs to learn appropriate teaching strategies.
- IETCs worked hard to succeed.
- A caring environment created by teacher educators and associate teachers as well as the support from the ACSC helped IETCs enhance their self-esteem and improve their proficiency in English.
- The diverse backgrounds of IETCs enriched the program and helped create a more inclusive learning environment.
- IETCs recommended their teacher education program as the best place to learn about the theory of teaching and innovative practices.